

OCI No. 3530/63
20 December 1963

JOINT CIA-DIA MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Assessment of Status of Soviet Military Personnel in Cuba

Summary

1. Since the October crisis of 1962, the role of the Soviet military in Cuba has changed and the great majority of Soviet military personnel has been withdrawn. Most of the Soviets remaining are advisers and technicians engaged in training Cuban personnel in the operation of Soviet weapons, in supervising the use and maintenance of Soviet equipment turned over to the Cubans, and in operating and controlling the surface-to-air missile (SAM) system. We believe that no organized Soviet ground combat units remain in Cuba and that the only Soviet ground forces personnel remaining are those advising Cuban military units. Based on our continuing appraisal of Soviet activity, we estimate Soviet military strength in Cuba at present to be between four and seven thousand. The present number will probably remain relatively unchanged until the program of training Cubans in the SAM system is completed, at which time substantial additional withdrawals probably will occur.

Withdrawal of Soviet Military Personnel

2. Since our last assessment in late October, the number of Soviet military personnel in Cuba has remained relatively stable. Between 15,000 and 18,000 Soviet military personnel have departed since October 1962. During the past two months a large number of Soviet military personnel have departed but this number has been offset somewhat by the arrival of replacement personnel and personnel returning from home leave. On balance, the departures appear to have exceeded the arrivals by several hundreds.

Status of Soviet Weapons

3. Of the Soviet weapons introduced into Cuba during the military buildup last year, all--with the exception of the surface-to-air missiles, and possibly the FROGs--have either been withdrawn from the island or transferred to Cuban control. The present trend involves continuing efforts to improve Castro's independent military capabilities. By mid-1964, enough Cubans probably will be trained to operate all remaining Soviet weapons, including the surface-to-air missiles.

DIA review(s) completed.

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5. Most Soviet ground forces personnel have been withdrawn from Cuba. Those ground forces personnel remaining are involved in training Cuban units throughout the island. The four Soviet armored camps have been transferred to Cuban control. The Soviet T-54/55 tanks and other equipment at the camps, with the possible exception of FROGs, have been turned over to the Cubans and most of the equipment moved to Cuban training installations and operational units.

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